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ABSTRACT

Recent studies suggest that the motion picture medium can be effectively used to alter affective behaviors. This paper explores the possibility of stimulating a change of values and attitudes of pre-service elementary education students through the production, viewing, and analysis of a motion picture film about inner-city children. It describes how students with varying cultural backgrounds can learn the fundamental concepts and techniques of film making and actively participate in filming the human conditions in urban centers. It is assumed that in this process they will increase their sensitivity to and awareness of an "alienated" segment of society. The professional staff (a psychologist, a sociologist, and an educator) can serve as counselors, monitors, and catalytic resources. The results can be evaluated by the use of various evaluative measures. (CH)

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An Exploration: Media in the Affective Domain

by

Bernard W. Miller

The essential purpose of this project is to stimulate the alteration of the values and attitudes of pre-service elementary education students through the production, viewing and analysis of a motion picture film about the environment of inner-city children and its related sounds.

The need for such an undertaking is broadly based upon the opinion that we undoubtedly are all the beneficiaries of our society's convention legal manifestations of just and humane legislation for the improvement of the condition of our disenfrancised, disadvantaged, and denied segments of our human society. But that characteristically much of our effort is forestalled at the interpersonal level. A flinty-eyed examination and a hard-headed logic suggests that society, in large measure, periodically has a lapse of clarity of thought and candor, thus militating against an adherence to legal and moral commitments and precepts. It is suspected that the public overtures of social evolution have softened since the beginning of this decade. At the same time, the measured cadence of social and economic change has always been, in practice, "lentamente." Indeed, regarded from the point of view of the humanist literally little has been accomplished. It is for this reason my project is designed--the deliberate installation in a public institution of the mechanism for more rapid behavior modification and attitude and value change.

Therefore, the exploration of which I speak is typically that, a venture to discover a region or regions, perhaps fraught with deadly entrapments, that have little been traversed in the past. Is it any wonder that I title, hesitantly and trepidly, the undertaking "An Exploration." What makes the project uniquely intimidating is its purpose: the alteration of individual attitudes and behavior toward another--"alienated"--segment of society. The single most compelling reason for the use of film in this project is the opportunity both the participant and observer have for active responding to the travails of personality reformation and behavioral change; with its

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corresponding "feedback" process. Film is the vehicle for such change while the participants (students and professors) are the change agents.

Without imputing that my hypotheses are derived exclusively from the following scholars, I do view them as demonstrably typical of the contemporary researchers on the subject. Many should accept their accounts as adequate primacy for my project. For example, Charles Hoban in 1949 prepared the Pennsylvania State University Report, No. 2, which ascribes the phenomenon of incidential learning to the viewing of films. For this reason I expect peripheral and, hopefully, desirable benefits from the students' film viewing. Walter Weiss and his "The Effects of Persuasive Communications on Attitudes," Annual Report No. 3, for the Air Force Office of Scientific Research, pointedly makes reference to the motion picture film as having a "natural cogency of communication," establishing incentives for counter-attitudinal behavior, supporting a communications credibility, as well as offering frequent exposures to the "communication." Two years later in 1969, "Channel of Communication: Encounter Groups" was completed by Vincent F. O'Connell at Florida State University, which demonstrated group encounter as a facilitator of student emotional growth, which teaches the isolate to communicate more effectively, and which increases sensitivity and awareness of others. Finally, Thelma Baldwin with others in their study "Communication Accuracy" single out the improved communication (language) skills that evolve through constant practice, especially for the urban child or youth. Incidentially, a larger condition of relevancy pertains to my project when students from alienated groups are encouraged to participate. There is no question in my mind but that the motion picture film in all its applications is the medium for our sensitization.

Recognizably, each of the studies extrapolated sufficiently support the use of the motion picture medium in altering attitudes and values. Of course, there is a readiness to chant "shallowness, superficiality" when motion picture film is mentioned as a facilitator of communication. This being the case, it must be emphasized that the motion picture film's indispensible role is to serve as a conveyance for interpersonal communication - nothing more. The ambiguous tale is told through film and the viewer "retells"

(perceives) it. For the reason that visual images cannot be permanently and rigidly implanted do I encourage its use. It can be examined and re-examined in whole or part, time after time without ever changing its chemical and physical structure (image), except deliberately. It enables complex, initially unmanageable impressions and culturally unfamiliar images to be contemplated and analyzed, alone and with others, again and again--even then imperfectly understood--but certainly with greater and more lasting impact than orally presented, descriptive terms. Better than any other educationally acceptable instrument, the motion-picture film image impresses and prolongs emotional and, optimistically, mental impressions. Aural impressions supplied with the visual ones will be the "thread with which the fabric of discussion will be sewn."

The above premise supports my contention that no one, as yet, has delimited the impact that the motion picture has statically or dynamically; therefore, it is conceivable that attitudes and values can be changed, however imperfectly, through viewing, discussing, and confronting one another with the "Black and White," "Rich and Poor," "Socially Acceptable and Unacceptable" social dilemmas with which we still persistently function.

When I sensed the idea for this project emerging I realized that I could not intrude my scheme into an existing teacher education program, and at the same time, realized that there would be two distinct types of student participant. On the one hand I would attract the intellectually curious, altruistic, humane individual; and on the other hand, the alert, self-seeking student would appear on my threshold, since whatever anyone's motivation, college credit, it would be reasonable to assume, would be assigned. In fact, awarding college credit would attract some of the very people who might eventually benefit society by their participation.

Student teams of presumably disparite attitudes and values, filming human conditions in urban centers, selecting subjects meaningfully for each team, and editing a composite film will provide a viewing context most provocative for later sessions, in a settled, supportive, austere, clinical, environment; thus, ensuring a balanced relationship among the participants. In

the process of filming and in the analysis of the finished film, reality for one may not be reality for another. For this imperative is professional staff most likely composed of a psychologist, sociologist, and educator will serve as counselors, monitors, and catalytic resources, empowered to unite responses and clarify feelings where suitable. Stressfully human emotions that may be aroused by the film depictions may demand the supportive environment offered by these professionals. The techniques of group encounter, interpersonal reaction, and role-playing will be amply demonstrated within the large discussion group.

At the time of this discussion, it is seemly to suggest that this present generation of college students spent the last decade of their lives engrossed in studying, appreciating, analyzing, and producing motion picture films, if we are to draw a judgment from the literature written on the subject of youthful, subculture mores. My experience with students leads me to believe that such is far from the situation. Needless to say, an intensive, short course in film making is appropriate. Part of the excitement of the experiment will surround this new found knowledge and skill. Significantly, in teaching the need for a suitable introduction, body, and conclusion to the story underlying the theme, we also teach the concept and technique of continuity in film making; in doing that we knowingly provide an incubator for attitude change. As you may know, continuity comes naturally when filming action that normally occurs in a well-established sequence. But when examining the complex, disjointed flow of urban life one may be lacking subconscious responses. It is not unreasonable than to ask the student teams to prepare a shooting script, which can be written or not. It is likely that a protagonist, the natural leader of a team, perhaps a resident of the urban community, will serve as chief writer and editor. Misimpressions, hard-dying myths, and gross falsehoods expressed will be brought to earth, grappled with and pinned, hopefully for the final match. Should this not occur it can certainly be counted as the first of perhaps several confrontations leading to the final decision. Incidentally, when physically possible, all interactions will be observed by a staff member. Other techniques dealt with would encompass scene length, camera-to-subject distances, cutaways, sequences, camera angles, and composition. These

limiting but adequate techniques will allow the film makers to devote more time to content. Obviously, the rudimentary operating techniques of a simple, automated camera will be demonstrated, as well as that of a simple but adequate tape recorder. Editing techniques will be discussed with the teams upon their return from the field. Again, the participation of a group of students with varied cultural, ethnic, economic, social, religious, and social backgrounds will assure a constancy of commitment to the idealogies expressed and to those refuted, I'm sure!

So far I, the idealist, have talked a good game (I hope). But I'm not completely out of touch with reality. There can be speculation that my motivation may not be another's. Should the participants have a lesser commitment, the project may be doomed. As a part of my "legacy," an assessment of the project is demanded. With this requisite, measures of effective behavior will be applied knowing, nonetheless, that no one evaluative instrument is definitive. Apart from their inherent weaknesses, the following measures may be used: The Interpersonal Orientation Scale; Truax Scales for Empathy, Congruence, and Positive Regard; Sequential Analysis of Verbal Interaction; Index of Adjustment and Values; a Picture Test for Social Distance; and the Differential Value Profile.

No Dacronian sword will hang over the student in the experiment. If a few group members depart the experiment disinterested individuals, we may still count the experience a successful one. For those who stay, I am not certain whether they will be able to organize their facts, ideas, and emotions into coherent form. If not, it will not be because of a lack of effort or time given to it but rather to our inability to communicate, momentarily. Through subconscious activities, through deliberate efforts in remembering past experiences, reflecting upon recent ones, and creating fresh perspectives, new interrelations will be brought together. If attitude or value change occurs among a few it will have surpassed my largest expectation when one considers the milenium required to alter minutely the condition of man as we know it today. Unquestionably, the project's history may be judged variously. Some will not be overly impressed with our findings. Others will discover an element of hope in our efforts. I believe that many professors and students will best describe it as "right on."